



Upper Warwoman Project Forest Health

Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests

What do I need to know?

Since 2011, the Forest Service has been working on the Upper Warwoman Project (UWP), located east of Clayton, GA. The project area covers approximately 12,500 acres.

Current Conditions

Historically, frequent fire actively influenced vegetation on the UWP landscape resulting in mostly open, park-like stands dominated by yellow pines, young oaks, and grassy woodlands. Currently, the area is dominated by dense white pine with little to no young forest or grassy wildlife openings.

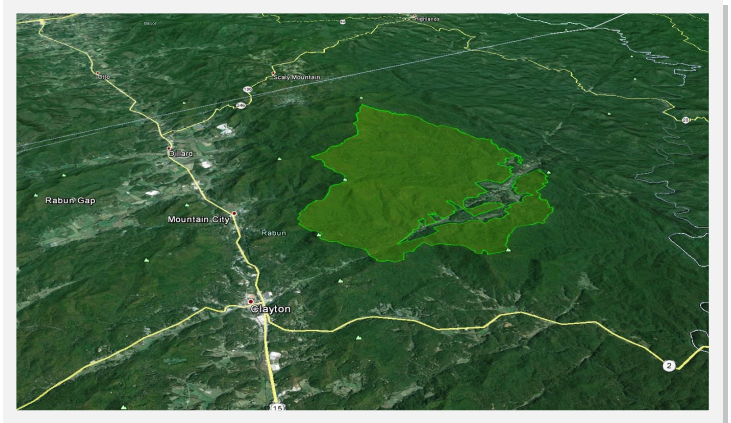
Additionally, 1930's road construction has led to many existing roads contributing to heavy stream sedimentation, poor trout waters, and an unhealthy watershed.

Primary Focus

The primary focus of the UWP is to return the area to a healthy and sustainable condition by reestablishing forest pattern and structure, improving wildlife habitat, and increasing watershed function.

Key Project Considerations

- Prescribed fire
- Forest health
- Road and watershed function
- Wildlife and fish habitat



The final Environmental Analysis and other information about the UWP is available online. Please visit www.fs.usda.gov/conf for more information.

2015 Forest Conditions

- ⇒ **100 percent** of the Upper Warwoman watershed is functioning at risk to forest resources such as native trout, wildlife, and rare fire dependent trees.
- ⇒ Yellow pine-oak communities are **less than half** their historic range. Those that remain have little to no natural regeneration and could eventually be lost.
- ⇒ **Just one percent** of the project area has young grass and tree habitat essential for deer, wild turkey, and ruffed grouse.
- ⇒ Roads account for **3.3 percent** of the project area but account for **54 percent of existing sediment** sources to streams.
- ⇒ Most roads- including Tuckaluge Road/FSR 153- date back to the 1930s and are **currently unsustainable**.
- ⇒ Five of the seven ecosystems within the project area are **highly departed** due to **lack of fire**.
- ⇒ Over **99 percent** of the project area is in the mid to late stages of growth making just 1 percent available for healthy regeneration.

Draft Decision

- Young, open forest would be established throughout the project area to create essential habitat for ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and other wildlife.
- More than 800 acres would be allocated as old-growth forest with an average stand age of 140 years old. This incorporates public desire to conserve old growth.
- More than 90 percent of the project area would see no thinning whatsoever. There would be no ground based commercial thinning on sustained slopes over 35 percent.
- Approximately six percent (785 acres) of the project area would be improved through commercial thinning. Three percent (330 acres) would be improved through noncommercial thinning. Thinning would likely occur over the course of 10 years.
- 1-2 thousand acres of prescribed fire every year over a decade would be the single largest tool used. Fire managers would focus of the south and west slopes which are well suited to frequent fire. North slopes would see low intensity backing fire only.
- All non-commercial thinning areas would be designated as public firewood cutting areas if accessible.
- The project is specifically designed to reduce visual impacts as much as possible including maintaining the 'viewshed' on open roads and 'feathering' thinning edges.
- Erosion would be reduced on 11 miles of Forest Service roads through improved drainage and road maintenance. Tuckaluge Creek Road/FSR 155 would not be relocated.
- More than 7 miles of trout streams in the watershed would be restored through increasing fish passage and minimizing erosion issues.

